

# Aurora Transportation Center, bridge project moving forward

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Steve Lord

Aurora officials are laying the ground work for a project to enhance the Aurora Transportation Center, build a pedestrian bridge over the Fox River that may include programmable lights for special occasions and a new beer concession stand at RiverEdge Park.

Aldermen on the City Council Finance Committee this week recommended six resolutions that in some way affect Phase II of the project — an overall \$14 million enhancement of Aurora Transportation Center facilities, North Broadway and RiverEdge Park.

The city is looking at getting things in order to bid the project in January 2018 and start construction by May of next year.

"The main goal is to create a more inviting and efficient facility at the Aurora Transportation Center," said Stephane Phifer, Planning and Zoning director for Aurora.

Aurora secured an \$11.4 million Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality grant from the federal government for the project. It also will receive a \$2 million grant from the Kane County Forest Preserve District.

Earlier this year, the city received permission from the federal government to move up the project's timeline so it can start next year.

The part of the project that has gotten the most attention from the public is a 900-foot, curved pedestrian and bicycle bridge that will connect bike trails on the west and east banks of the Fox River, going over a natural island known as Blues Island.

The bridge will be built on two elevations, with pedestrians using a lower elevation on the south side of the bridge, and bikes using a higher elevation on the north side. In the middle of the bridge, on the island, the bridge will widen to create an overlook for people to look at the river, island and downtown Aurora.

A 900-foot, curved pedestrian and bicycle bridge that will connect bike trails on the west and east banks of the Fox River is part of a project being examined by the city of Aurora. (City of Aurora)

The bridge also will be lit at night, and will include some programmable lights for special occasions or even to match what is happening on stage at RiverEdge Park.

Part of the project also will add onto the southern portion of RiverEdge Park, even creating a southern entrance and a beer concession stand. The beer stand at the park is being patterned after those at Summerfest in Milwaukee, which have proven to be successful, Phifer said.

Other parts of the project include: a total of 843 more parking spaces around the Transportation Center, with 123 at the station itself, and 94 more in the lots on the west side of the river; moving the bus pulse point to be next to the train tracks; and relocating the traffic signal that is the current entrance to the Two Brothers Roundhouse on North Broadway to the southern entrance of the Transportation Center.

That signal is at an entrance only — the only way to exit Two Brothers is behind the neighboring Holiday Inn hotel. The new signal will provide a new entrance and exit to Two Brothers and the hotel, Phifer said.

"That's a confusing entrance that will be modified," she said.

Finance Committee members recommended resolutions that cover engineering, design and construction related to the project.

They delayed recommendation of two more resolutions — one an agreement with the Pace bus system to spell out maintenance and installation, as well as revenue sharing, for relocation of bus shelters; the other a local agency agreement with state and federal officials for construction, as well as an engineering services agreement with HR Green, of Yorkville.

HR Green was chosen from a list of firms that answered a request for qualifications put out by the city. A committee of city employees scored the request, and city officials said HR Green was the most experienced firm on the list, and had the most experience with the city.

The company did engineering services on the Indian Trail and Sullivan Road bridge projects for the city.

Aldermen delayed the two other resolutions to get some more information, including maps and diagrams of the project. Ald. Robert O'Connor, at large, Finance Committee chairman, said he will call a special committee meeting at 4:30 p.m. Oct. 17 — just before the scheduled Committee of the Whole meeting — to vote on the final two resolutions.

That way, all eight resolutions still could come to the Committee of the Whole to be placed on the Oct. 24 full City Council meeting agenda.

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